

# THE DE LAND NEWS.

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## THE LANDES WITHOUT STILTS

### HOW SCIENCE HAS UPSET A TRADITION

**A Vast Region in Southwestern France Turned from Swamp to Rich Fields—This Accomplished Through Reforestation, the Maritime Pine Being the Tree Used—A Veritable Agricultural Miracle Wrought—And the Healthfulness of the District Has Been Immensely Improved**

(BY JOHN L. MATHEWS.)

One by one the traditions of boyhood vanish into the thin air. When I was small and credulous I read many stories—and what was more effective saw many pictures—of the peasants of the Landes, curious creatures mounted upon stilts eight feet high, balancing themselves with long poles while they watched their sheep. The Youth's Companion, or St. Nicholas—I am not sure which it was—had a picture which long remained in memory, of an ancient crone on the summit of her stilts, knitting a stocking; and I always wondered whether the stocking was to be long enough for the stilt, or—well, just "or". There were famous stories of stilt races to be read then, and one could see in the illustrations these peasants of the Landes galloping about like excited race-horses, taking a turn now and then with the pole to keep from falling. The villain always stuck his stilts deep in the mire and came a cropper, and the hero always succeeded in leaping successfully eighteen feet from the top of the last dry knoll.

And here I am on the edge of the Landes, just returned from a journey through them, and not a stilt did I see,

steadying him when he stood still completed the outfit and a common sight in the Landes a decade ago, even, was a shepherdess on stilts, steadying herself with her pole and knitting placidly, six feet in air, while she watched her sheep. An American humorist even presented in a yarn in a popular magazine a picture of a boy from this region abroad with some fellows on a ship, and compelled to sleep on deck on his back with his legs and stilts pointed skyward and braced against a mast.

### An Improvement That Began A Century Ago

It's all gone now. About a century ago, in the first decade of the last hundred years, some of the land owners in co-operation with the Government began the experiment of planting forests to hold the dunes which threaten to overwhelm even the barrens. The dunes of the coast here are formed of the cleanest and purest sand it is possible to imagine—standing in immense ridges along the seashore, sometimes three hundred feet high. One stands at the edge of the sea and looks up and to the right and left and there is nothing else in sight for miles but this endless stretch of white sand ridge. Back of the first, even ridge it lies in uneven hillocks, dunes and valleys, where it has been tossed by the wind. There does not appear to be in it any element which will support plant life. And as it lies exposed the winds pick it up and drive it where they will. Thus the moving dunes, like that which threatened Saultack, Michigan, and like those on the Carolina coast, move steadily inward. The old Roman capital of the region was long ago overwhelmed and many other villages have disappeared under

gun, and followed up the same way, while the first heals. So the work goes on until on many trees there are six or eight cuts, with strips of bark between and with the older cuts entirely healed. The pots of turpentine are emptied several times in a season. When the tree has been bled to the limit of profit it is felled, the small stuff is carefully cut and piled for firewood, and the trunk is cut into sections for mine props, in which Bordeaux consequently enjoys an enormous traffic with England. The ground is worked over carefully in this way; the income in resin is very great and the trees which remain standing keep the whole reforested and well covered.

### How the Government Protects Its Forests

Of the forests which stand now upon the "waste" lands southwest of Bordeaux, about 125,000 acres belong to the French Government, a small amount to the communes and more than 2,000,000 acres to individuals. The Government forests are mostly along the edge of the sea, and at the time of writing this I have just returned from an examination of them and of the method by which they are conducted. The whole sea side of the dunes is thinly covered now with a peculiar coarse grass, growing in tufts or bunches, planted regularly in rows, tufts and rows each about a foot apart. As far as the eye can see these rows extend, with perfect precision, along the steep faces of the dune where they are exposed to the hard sea winds. At the top of the seaward ridge a low wattle fence gives stability to the sands, and back of this begins the plantation. Nearest the sea there are very few trees, some furze bushes, some small plants of various sorts. The pines are blown down by the wind, beaten and gnarled. The practice now is to cut them off about five feet from the ground and thus force their growth into low branches, so that each covers as much

## SEPTEMBER MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL

The regular monthly meeting of the City Council was held Monday night, September 12, at 7:30 o'clock. Present, President Davis, Councilmen Bishop, Dreka, Fountain, Hon and Woodall.

Bills were audited and warrants drawn in payment of same as follows: R. O. Campbell \$ 31 00 Watts and Miller Company 62 42 Cuyler & Mohler 27 86 The Ahrens & Ott Company 18 26 G. W. Fisher 70 W. C. Cannons 7 25 Landis & Fish 110 07 The Fields Garage 17 05 W. P. Richardson & Co. 2 00 Bond Lumber Company 1 26 W. C. Watts 4 00 Electric Light & Ice Co. 200 00 DeLand Telephone Co. 1 30 News Publishing Company 1 50 Maggie Wilson 4 00 G. L. Hord 24 74 G. A. Dreka & Co. 13 37 Blane Bros 25 20 Scott Hodgkins 8 20

### Must Have Night Trains

The DeLand Business League, through President Gould and Secretary Landis, presented the following resolutions, which were discussed, and then adopted unanimously. Mr. Landis and Mr. Gould each made interesting talks advocating the passage of the resolution, which follows:

WHEREAS, the A. C. L. Railway is the only railroad running into DeLand, and

WHEREAS, said railroad furnishes no passenger trains to make connection from DeLand with the night trains on the main line of the A. C. L. Ry. Co., and

age, 88,936, gallons; new taps made, 7; taps closed, 12; taps opened, 7; coal consumed 23 tons; coal in bin, 10 tons; wood consumed, 1 1/2 cords; and a report of routine work.

A communication was read from G. W. Fisher and others requesting the formal opening of an alley from New York avenue to Short street, just west of Fisher's drug store. The petition was referred to the street committee for report.

A communication was read from Scott Hodgkins and others requesting the formal opening of Short street. This petition was also referred to the street committee for report.

The City treasurer reported the following balances on hand August 31: General Revenue \$1438 05 Fire and Water 224 35 Sanitary 39 46 Bond interest 4280 07 Water works 1053 75 Streets 379 75

### Sanitary Inspection

Chairman Fountain of the Sanitary Committee reported that he had employed C. M. Brokaw to make a house-to-house inspection of the city, which had not yet been completed.

### More Lights.

The matter of installing electric lights on West Voorhis avenue, East Howry avenue, and West Rich avenue, from Clara to Delaware avenue, was informally discussed. The Electric Light Company offered to install a sufficient number to thoroughly light these streets for \$100.00 per year, to be added to and become a part of the present contract. The offer was accepted and the lights ordered installed under

## FALL HATS JUST IN Fountainn

nor a racing peasant nor a bog hole that one could have tumbled in if he had been a villain. One more tradition gone, one more source of good stories for boys blocked up.

In this case the whole fault lies with the maritime pine, the common short leaf yellow pine of our southern Atlantic forests. Planted over the vast waste of the Landes it has turned the region into a perfect paradise, changed the climate, dried the swamps, watered the deserts and deprived the Landes peasants of the reason for their merry skitting about on posts.

### How the Swamps and Stilts Came to Be.

In the old days the Gasconne Coast lying to the southwest of Bordeaux—part of Roman Aquitania—was a vast swamp, bordered on the seashore by sand dunes, drained by sluggish rivers, underlaid by a peculiar formation of ferruginous clay and vegetable mold which cemented and became impervious to water. There were several millions of acres in the region thus underlaid, and it was notorious in all France as a region of malaria and other disease. In summer the hot sun burned it up, in the wet season it overflowed with the rainfall which could not soak in and would not run off. The drifting sands blocked all the drainage channels, and there was nothing which could be carried on profitably except the pasturing of sheep on the better parts of the land. To meet the exigencies of the occasion, to be able to move about through the morasses and to follow the sheep and watch them, the peasants adopted the stilts as a part of their apparel, and became famous in Europe for the adeptness they developed. Stilts six to eight feet long were by no means uncommon, and, being made so that the upper part strapped to the calf of the leg they were used with a facility which would amaze an American boy. A long pole for balancing the walker and for

the march of the devastating sand.

Experiments with foresting on the sand soon developed the knowledge that the maritime pine would flourish on these dunes, and by the middle of the last century Government, commune, and, most of all, private land holders were busy planting the trees. As a result there are in the district nearly 2,500,000 acres of pine forest, all of it growing fast, all of it working profitably. And in addition the land which remains unreforested has become useful and fertile, and gardens and vineyards are found all through the district.

### How the Pines are Planted

The pines which are planted here are not treated as roughly as are those on our own sand barrens of the South. There is none of the rough cutting and deep boxing which so quickly destroys the trees down there. Instead, when the forest has attained a considerable growth, so that a majority of the trees are from three to six inches in diameter those which are to be bled for turpentine are selected, those which are straight and promise good timber left to grow in full vigor. Most of the turpentine, therefore, comes from the crooked, or stunted trees which would not otherwise be very profitable. In them the bark is cleared away on the side on which it is thickest, in a cutting perhaps 2 1/2 inches wide, and at the start a foot high. This does not enter the wood more than a third of an inch, as only the surface carries the sap. A zinc gutter is driven lightly into the bottom of the cut, and an earthen pot set to catch the drainage. Thereafter every five or six days the attendant comes and chips a new piece at the top of the cutting. The cutting thus extends gradually up the tree until, sometimes, ten or twelve feet from the ground. More commonly it does not go above eight feet. Then, a third of the way around the tree another cutting is be-

ground as possible. Two or three hundred yards back the growth thickens, and there begins to be enough of a carpet of mold and needles to sustain the feet as one walks along. The trees here, and for half a mile inland, are stunted and gnarled, but each is tapped for resin even when quite small, and their twisted trunks show old scars and new blazes. Attached to each is the earthen pot, and those I saw were all well filled. Farther back, a mile from the sea, one crosses a great fire-line, a broad, bare strip of sand, giving a hundred feet or more of protection to the larger forests in the rear. These are exploited for their timber value as well as for dune protection and their resin; and, the wind being broken, the trees are of greater size. As one advances inland—and I walked ten miles or so back from the sea through this forest—the spectacle of tremendous dunes, hundreds of feet in height, arrested where they stood, halted by this pine growth, testifies to the value of the work. The soft green of the forest hides the white glare of the imprisoned sand, ready at every chance to break loose again.

The Government forests are divided into tracts of about 125 acres each, and when well grown the trees are sold as they stand, the buyer having four years in which to clear them. This he does by first bleeding or gumming the trees for three years and in the fourth cutting them for their merchantable value. The State dune woods have not long been conducted at a profit—the Government ledger has shown a credit balance for but thirteen years. At present, however, this waste sand forest, besides providing protection, shows a net annual return of about \$1 an acre.

### Scientific Forestry Indeed

As for the private forests which lie back of the Government protection, they might well be the pine woods about

WHEREAS, the City of DeLand now has a population of over three thousand inhabitants in summer (and over five thousand in the winter months), is a growing city, and in the last five years has more than doubled its business interests and hence the freight and passenger business of the A. C. L. Railway must necessarily have more than doubled likewise, and

WHEREAS, the people of DeLand and surrounding communities are greatly inconvenienced by the fact that there are no night trains connecting the city of DeLand with the night trains on the A. C. L. Railway, and

WHEREAS, the DeLand Business Men's League have requested the A. C. L. Railway Company to put on a night schedule of trains and the said A. C. L. Railway Company has refused, now.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Common Council of the City of DeLand on behalf of the people of the City of DeLand, and surrounding community, do hereby request and petition the Honorable Board of Railway Commissioners of the State of Florida, to pass and enforce an order requiring the A. C. L. Railway Company to put on and maintain night trains connecting the City of DeLand with the night trains on the main line of the A. C. L. Railway Company.

It was decided to bring this matter to the attention of the State Railroad Commission and ask immediate action, if we fail to receive immediate relief, a petition will be circulated, and practically every resident of this section will be asked to go on record as favoring the improvement of the service, which is something that DeLand should have had for many years.

### Reports of Officers.

The marshal reported the collection of \$35.45 in fines during August.

The city engineer reported: Water pumped, 2,729,125 gallons; daily aver-

the supervision of the Street Committee.

### Water Works Matters

Chairman Davis of the Fire and Water Committee brought up the matter of changing fuel at the water plant from coal to wood, which was discussed, and it was decided to continue the use of coal, but to change to West Virginia coal, Alabama coal being used at present.

The matter of making change in firemen at the water plant was referred to the fire and water committee and engineer, with power to act.

### Drainage and Reclamation.

Mr. T. L. Ames appeared before Council with reference to drainage at the intersection of Rich avenue and Pine Street. This matter and the advisability of installing drainage wells was informally discussed, but no action was taken.

### More Sidewalks to be Built

Notice was given of intention to introduce at the next meeting ordinances as follows:

An ordinance to repeal Ordinance Nos. 240 to 243, inclusive, and to provide rules and regulations governing the use and operation of the fire department.

An ordinance requiring the laying of cement sidewalks on the north and south sides of East Michigan avenue, from the Boulevard to Amelia avenue.

An ordinance requiring the laying of cement sidewalks on north and south sides of Howry avenue, from the Boulevard to Alabama avenue.

### Answers to Correspondents.

Who is a Democrat? A Democrat is one who votes in a Democratic primary. Who is a Republican? A Republican is a postmaster.

Money will build a mansion, but it takes love to make it a home.

Continued on page two.